

An Essay on

Menstruation

Respectfully submitted to  
the Faculty of the  
Hon. Med. Coll. of Pa.  
For the

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by Frank Nichols

of  
Grafton Mass.  
Philadelphia

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It is generally conceded  
that true menstruation,  
that is a periodical Sanguineous flow from the sexual organs while in perfect health is peculiar to the human female.

There are many however who confine this distinctive peculiarity entirely to its Sanguineous appearance maintaining that there is a periodical discharge from the sexual organs of females of all, or nearly all species of animals, the function of which is essentially the same in its nature as menstruation in woman.

This is undoubtedly the truth in regard to this



important function.

Menstruation, then as a sanguineous discharge is peculiar to the human female although a periodical flow of the same nature in other respects though much less in quantity is common to all animals.

This sanguineous flow has its origin from the inner surface of the uterus, taking place at regular periods, and depends entirely upon the health of the ovaries and the formation of ova; for we find



that if the ovaries are from any cause absent or diseased though the uterus be in its normal condition, no menstruation takes place, showing conclusively that the immediate cause of this flow is the formation & elimination of ova.

From this fact it would seem that impregnation could take place at no other time except during or immediately previous to the flow, which however is not the case, for



we find conception taking place at apparently different times between the periods.

The reason for this is not positively known, but it is probably because all the ova formed are not matured and discharged at the menstrual period, hence the impregnation may take place after the flow has ceased.

It is also probable that conception may be the result of coition which took place many days previous to the commencement of the catamenial discharge.



for it has been ascertained  
beyond question that the sperm  
cells and their contents retain  
their fecundating power for a  
long time if retained in the  
vagina or uterus.

Normal menstruation  
may be considered an un-  
equivocal sign of an aptitude  
for procreation, that is, the  
uterus must be in a men-  
struating condition in order  
to retain the impregnated  
ovum and develop the ger-  
minal mass.

There have been many cases  
cited which would seem to prove



that impregnation may take place previous to the eruption of the catamenia.

Some of these may be exceptions to the general rule, but in nearly every case it undoubtedly may be shown that there has been a serous if not a colored discharge "per vaginam" previous to or near the time at which the impregnation took place.

Doctor Dewees cautions his readers against using active measures to suppress what they may suppose to be leucorrhoea in young girls approach-



ing puberty, but which in fact are the first attempts at menstruation, and if suppressed might lead to serious consequences.

This colorless discharge he says may take place at several of the first periods before the sanguineous flow is established, and it is his opinion that it is during this time that those pregnancies take place which are said to occur before the catamenia have made their appearance.

The cessation of menst-



ation may be considered as  
an indication of the closing  
of the childbearing period,  
which is usually about  
the forty fifth year.

There have been  
instances of conceptions which  
have taken place at advanced  
periods of life, many  
years after the cessation of  
the menses; but we gener-  
ally find that where proper  
and careful investigation  
was made there was an  
eruption of the catamenia  
either at regular or irregular  
intervals for some time



previous to the successful co-  
tion: moreover the nature and  
function of menstruation must  
preclude all possibility of con-  
ception and the development  
of the germinal mass. before  
its establishment or after  
its final cessation in after  
life unless there be in the sys-  
tem an effort toward returning  
youthfulness and a reestablish-  
ment for the time being of a  
healthy catamenial flow.

and possible enlargement of  
the mammary glands and  
with increased deposition of  
adipose substance over and  
around them.

Like neck and chest



The first eruption  
of the catamenia is usual-  
ly preceded by various phe-  
nomena peculiar to this  
eventful period in the  
young girl's life.

The first and most  
constant indication of approach-  
ing womanhood is more or  
less painful sensitiveness  
and visible enlargement of  
the mammary glands and  
greatly increased deposition of  
adipose substance over and  
around them.

The neck and chest



also soon increase in fullness  
and symmetry and the eyes  
increase in brilliancy and in-  
telligence, in short the whole  
system undergoes a develop-  
ment little short of a trans-  
formation. With these we  
frequently see phenomena  
of a different character, such  
as vertigo, dizziness, conges-  
tive headache, faintness, pains  
in the back and loins &c.

all of which are usually re-  
lieved by the first slight  
discharge from the sexual or-  
gans although many of them  
may return at each suc-



ceeding period until menstruation is fully established and even afterward if there is some slight disturbance of this function.

The age at which girls commence to menstruate is said by many authors to vary as the climate differs, commencing considerably earlier in life in a warm climate than in a temperate or cold one, but it is probable that differences of social life, the intercourse of the sexes and early education have much more to



do with hastening or retarding  
this function than differences  
of climate.

In civilized life and  
temperate climate the catamenia  
usually make their first appear-  
ance about the fifteenth or six-  
teenth year. Young girls who  
reside in cities in luxurious  
indulgence, frequenters of theaters  
and places of amusement where  
the passions are much excited,  
frequently menstruate and to all  
appearances have arrived to a  
state of puberty as early as  
the twelfth or thirteenth year  
while country girls do not



reach this state many times until they are eighteen.

The quantity of menstrual blood discharged at each period and the length of time employed is quite variable in different individuals.

The former is usually from two to six ounces and the latter from three to eight days.

Some women are said to lose a much larger quantity at each period, but it is supposed to be no mark of a greater aptitude for conception.

Menstruation as a general rule does not con-



time during pregnancy or lactation unless the child is kept at the breast an unusually long time and its appearance in such cases is a warning to the mother to refrain from nursing for her own health as well as that of her child.

Its disappearance in married life may be considered as the first general sign, (though not always reliable) that conception has taken place, and that the inner surface of the uterus is busily engaged in developing the germinal mass.